

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL

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All members of the Universal Church are called to serve in the great mission of the Church in whichever capacity they are able whether they are lay or ordained ministers, all are called to work in the vineyard. As Christ commanded us to, "Go into the world and proclaim the good news to all creation" (Mk 16:15)



The Parish Pastoral Council is important in a parish for many reasons; to support the Pastor and the many tasks that involve the proper functioning of a Parish. It is from Christ, his Disciples and the early Church that we learn the development of the Church; which began as local communities in communication with each other and caring for the needs of all. "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers." (Acts 2:42) Obviously many things have changed in the dynamics of a parish since these early communities first met but as the 'sang' goes the more things change the more things remain the same. What I mean by that is exteriorly things may have changed but in the Parish Pastoral Council is still heavily based on the model of the early Church Communities. "History reminds us of two essential and fundamental realities of the Church, past, present, and future: first, the Church is about community; second, the local community is the foundation of the Church." ¹

A Parish Council is a body of parishioners chosen to help with the planning, decision-making, and organizational aspects of the Parish. "Parish councils were to serve in an advisory capacity to the pastor, and were to utilize the many and varied gifts of the laity in service to the Church as it continues to carry out the mission of Christ."² Over time this group became the only 'doers' of the parish and were more of a hindrance than a help. The Second Vatican Council was inspired to call forth this active roll again but with a specific role of leading the parish community with present and future plans as well as increased education and formation for the council members and the parish at large. Since the Second Vatican Council the Parish Councils have been renamed Parish Pastoral Councils, and with the name change came a new role. "Parish Pastoral Council is primarily charged to assist in the development of mission- focused parishes rather than programmatic or finance-driven ones. It attempts to place at the heart of the parish a consciousness of a zeal for the mission of Jesus Christ."³

The Parish Pastoral Council is an important role in a parish, it reminds us that it is not only the role of the pastor to ensure that the mission of the parish remains focused on Christ and his Gospel mission. Rather it is the role of each member to play and important part in maintaining the focus of the parish on Christ for it is easy in this world to become distracted and pulled from His mission. This council by no means takes away from the Pastors role of authority but supports his mission that the Lord and the diocese has entrusted him with.

¹ Jim Campbell, Debra Snoddy and Andrew McNally, Parish Pastoral Council: A Formation Manuel, Veritas Publications, 2010, page 7

² Anaeto, Dominic, Fr, PS 805, Fundamentals of Pastoral Theology, class notes Week 7- Lesson 7: Parish Pastoral Council, Spring 2014

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